

**SUMMARY OF THE
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
APRIL 20, 1999**

The On-site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, April 20, 1999, at 12:30 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Steven Baker of the Arizona Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to reach consensus agreement on proposed changes to the standard and assessment checklists prior to the upcoming fifth annual NELAC meeting.*

INTRODUCTION

The meeting was called to order with a general discussion of the agenda. Mr. James Webber, of the New York State Department of Health, joined the committee to discuss assessment checklists. Ms. Barbara Finazzo, the committee's NELAC Board of Directors (BOD) liaison, noted that she had suggested to Ms. Jeanne Mourrain, NELAC Director, that the On-site Assessment Committee be allotted more time at the fifth interim meeting than at the fifth annual meeting. Given the role of the On-site Assessment Committee in the NELAC process, Ms. Mourrain agreed to pursue this option. Mr. Baker asked how many committee members would be attending the fifth annual meeting in Saratoga Springs, NY: all but one indicated their intention to attend.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE STANDARDS

The committee reviewed and reached consensus agreement on six proposed changes to the NELAC standard. The proposed changes, which will be presented at the fifth annual meeting, are as follows:

- Section 3.2.1 (Basic Qualifications) - The last sentence of the third paragraph will be changed to read: "Assessors employed by accrediting authorities on the date that the first Accrediting Authority is granted NELAP recognition must meet the NELAC-specified basic course requirements within two years after the first NELAC-specified basic course is offered and the applicable technical course requirements within four years after the first applicable technical training course is offered."
- Section 3.3 (FREQUENCY OF ON-SITE ASSESSMENTS) - This section will be renamed "FREQUENCY AND TYPES OF ON-SITE ASSESSMENTS."
- Section 3.3.2 (Follow-up Assessments) - The phrase "forty-five (45) calendar days" will be changed to read "thirty (30) calendar days".
- Section 3.5 (ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE/FORMAT) - This section will be renamed "ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES."

- Section 3.5.3 (Records Review) - This section will be renamed “On-site Laboratory Records Review and Collection.”
- Section 3.5.6 (Follow-up and Reporting Procedures) - The phrase “corrective action report” in the second sentence of this section will be changed to “plan of corrective action.”

Mr. Baker noted that he has received several additional proposed changes from the Field Measurements *ad hoc* Committee. The On-site Assessment Committee will address these proposed changes after the annual meeting.

ASSESSOR CHECKLISTS

Mr. Baker verified that all members had received several completed assessor checklists distributed electronically prior to the meeting. The committee briefly discussed these checklists and reached consensus agreement for posting them on the NELAC Webpage. All checklists, with the exception of the asbestos analysis by transmission electron diffraction (TEM) checklist, are written in approximate American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) format. There was some discussion of whether the asbestos checklist should be modified in A2LA format. Mr. Webber noted that asbestos analysis is somewhat subjective in nature. He also noted that, while the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) for asbestos analysis has weeded out assessors who are not competent or unwilling to pay attention to checklists, there is still some variation from assessor to assessor. For this reason, Mr. Webber suggested that the more detailed the checklist, the more consistent the audit from assessor to assessor. The committee agreed to post the asbestos TEM checklist as written. Several committee members requested the asbestos TEM checklist in WordPerfect format. Mr. Webber agreed to provide Mr. Baker with the checklist in this format to be distributed to members of the committee. Checklists still to be completed include the microbiology checklist being prepared by Mr. Wayne Davis and Mr. Charles Dyer, a radiochemistry (radchem) checklist, and some general chemistry checklists. Mr. Davis noted that Mr. Dyer’s portion of the microbiology checklist should be ready soon and offered to submit the completed checklist in A2LA format to Mr. Baker by April 23, 1999. It was noted that the committee still has not located an individual with radchem expertise to replace Mr. Stan Morton.

It was generally agreed that the posted checklists would generate many comments at the annual meeting. The committee then briefly discussed comments received from ~~Mr. Dan Dickinson~~, of the New York State Department of Health, on those checklists already posted on the NELAC Webpage. Due to time constraints, most of ~~Mr. Dickinson’s~~ the comments will be addressed after the annual meeting, as summarized below:

Comment: *Manual and Automated Colorimetry* checklist questions referencing the methods in EPA 1993 are not enforceable with respect to QC limits in EPA Region II (NY/NJ) because they are not the promulgated versions in the Clean Water Act.

Response: The 1993 methods are enforceable for drinking water, and are increasingly being used by the regions and states for enforcement of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. The regions have been given the authority

to approve these newer methods for NPDES until the newer methods are updated into the 40 CFR regulations (possibly this year).

Comment: Question 2.1 in the *Extractable Organic Compounds - GC* checklist asks for mercuric chloride as a preservative for Methods 508 and 515.1. This is no longer a method requirement for Method 507, 508, or 515.1 (Reference EPA 600/R-94/173, Technical Notes on Drinking Water Methods, page 57.)

Response: The mercuric chloride reference will be removed from the checklist after the annual meeting.

Comment: The grammar of question 4.3 in the *Inorganic Compounds - IC* checklist should be reviewed. This question is also present in other checklists. As referenced in question 4.20, does NELAC really mean to require confirmatory testing for IC positives?

Response: This language will be reviewed and changed after the annual meeting. It was suggested that the comment on question 4.20 be referred to the Quality Systems Committee.

Comment: The *ICP Metals* checklist questions 4.19, 4.20, and 4.21 are actually organics questions.

Response: The ICP checklist will be modified to exclude the organic references after the annual meeting.

Comment: The sample preservation section of the *Volatile GC/MS* checklist would be more helpful if it also included questions to verify the order of preservation, i.e. dechlorinate, then acidify. (Reference EPA 600/R-94/173, Technical Notes on Drinking Water Methods, page 34.)

Response: The checklist will be modified after the annual meeting.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Baker reminded members of the committee that the next On-Site Assessment teleconference is scheduled for May 5, 1999, at 12:30 p.m. EDT. There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned shortly before 2:30 p.m. EDT.

**ACTION ITEMS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE
APRIL 20, 1999**

| Item No. | Action | Date to be Completed |
|-----------------|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. | Mr. Baker will forward proposed changes to the standard to Ms. Elizabeth Dutrow. | Immediately |
| 2. | Mr. Davis will forward completed microbiology checklist to Mr. Baker. | April 23, 1999 |
| 3. | Mr. Webber will forward asbestos TEM checklist to Mr. Baker in WordPerfect format for distribution to committee | Immediately |
| 4. | Mr. Baker will provide committee's preliminary response to Mr. Dickinson's comments. | Immediately |

PARTICIPANTS
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE TELECONFERENCE
APRIL 20, 1999

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